

The Atari Drawings

In 1982 executives from Warner, Inc., Atari's parent company were scheduled to visit the Research Lab where the Encyclopedia Project was located. Brenda Laurel and I came up with these scenarios to give the execs a sense of what we were working toward. The drawings were made by Disney animator, Glen Keane.

When you look at these, remember they were made 16 years before Google and 12 years before Yahoo , even 8 years before the earliest web-based search engines.

That said one of the most interesting things about these scenarios as seen today, is that with the exception of the image of the architect and the teacher none of them indicated any inkling that the most important element of the web to come was that it would bring people into contact with each other. What we see hear is almost entirely people accessing content from a central server, no sense that we would be communicating with each other or uploading our own contributions to the collective culture. My own explanation for this lapse focuses on the print-era mentality that saw readers purely as consumers of content.

It took some time for me to get past that, but with the rise of the social web and the help of my young colleagues at the Institute for the Future of the Book, I finally started to understand that the most important element in the future of media was social production and social consumption.



Children in the dinosaur exhibit at the Museum of Natural History carry Intelligent Encyclopedia's with headphones around instead of audiotape players. Interactive simulations of dinosaur life from the IE are running on the wall monitors.



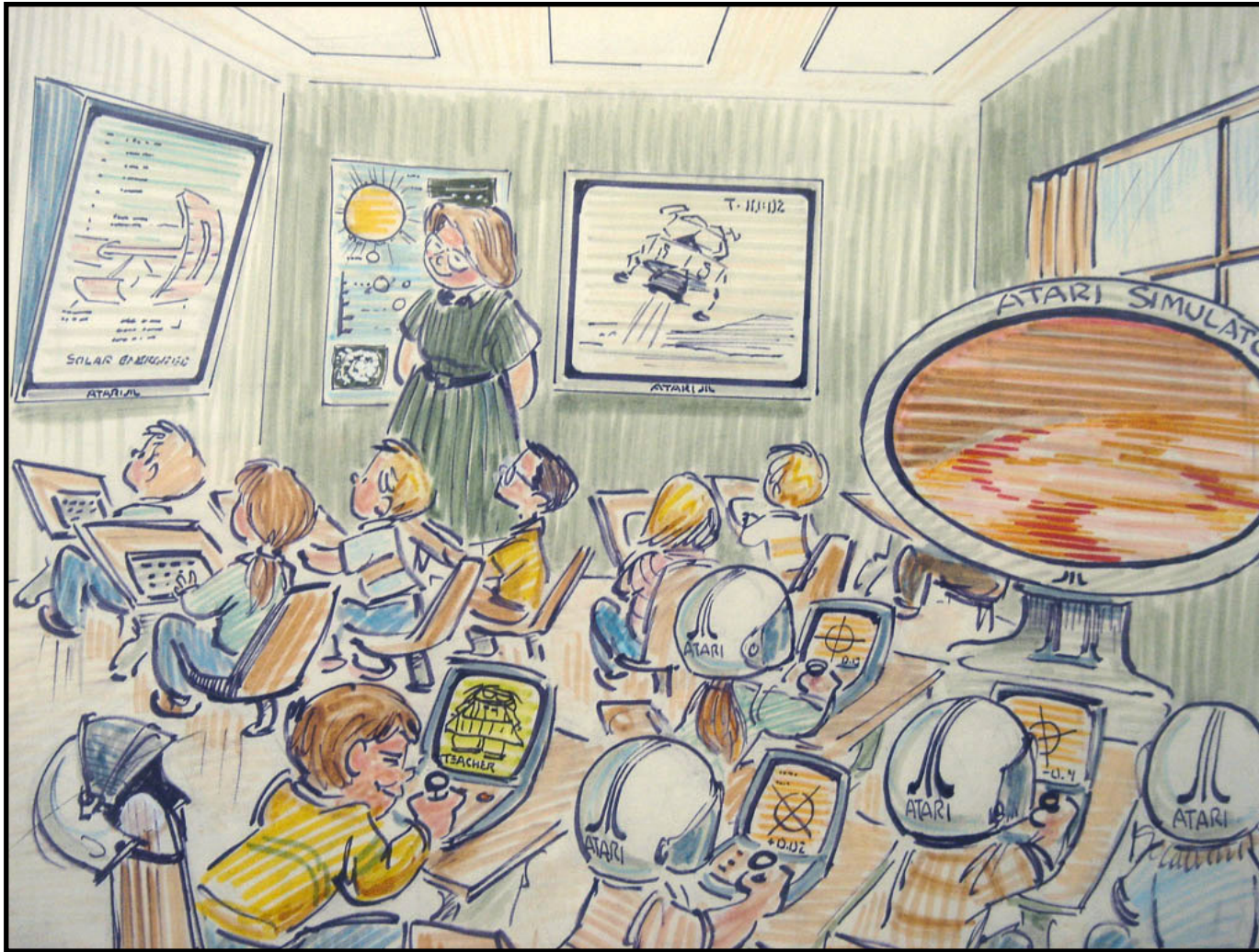
A father reminisces with his son about '60's Rock and Roll, calling up footage from the Beatles appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show from the Intelligent Encyclopedia.



A vintner in northern California wonders what would be involved in changing wine production to sake. On horseback he is asking the Intelligent Encyclopedia about soil and water requirements for growing rice.



An earthquake wakes a couple in the middle of the night. The Intelligent Encyclopedia, connected to an online service informs them of the severity of the earthquake and makes safety tips readily available.



A third grade class studies various aspects of space travel. The group on the right is running a simulation of a Mars landing while the students on the left are studying a design for a spacecraft.



A business man on his way to New York, reviews stock market trends.



In a bar, the two men at the right are watching football while they run what-if simulations on the countertop Intelligent Encyclopedia which second-guess the quarterback. The couple on the left is taking an on-the-spot course in wine connoisseurship.



An architect in New York studies Japanese motif for a project he's working on, while a teacher in Tokyo talks with her class about western architectural styles.



A mother and her children looking into a tidepool in Laguna ask the Intelligent Encyclopedia about the plants and animals that they see. [Notice the antenna for cellular communication.]